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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 001188

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SUBJECT: KILLINGS OF MAOISTS IN TERAI PROMPT DELAY IN COMBATANT VERIFICATION

REF: KATHMANDU 1168

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

Summary

¶1. (C) United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) chief Ian Martin told the Ambassador June 14 that the launch of the second phase of UNMIN's registration of Maoist "combatants" -- combatant verification -- had been unexpectedly delayed. He indicated the senior Maoist leadership had decided to hold off starting the process in light of the recent killing of five Maoists in the Terai, including two Young Communist League leaders in Rupandehi District June 13, and a Maoist Central Committee member in Saptari District on June 12. Martin hoped the process would begin on June 18. The UNMIN chief and the Ambassador agreed that it would be important for the Government of Nepal (GON) to take rapid action to identify and arrest the culprits. Martin worried that Maoist chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal (aka Prachanda) might have trouble getting his more hotheaded colleagues to stay in the political process in light of the killings. The UNMIN head also described how the verification process would proceed and voiced concern that the GON had no plan on what to do with Maoists released from the camps.

Combatant Verification Delayed

¶2. (C) The Ambassador began a June 14 meeting with United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) chief Ian Martin with congratulations on the start by UNMIN of the second phase of registration of Maoist "combatants," but Martin cut him short. The UNMIN chief expressed regret that, contrary to Martin's June 12 announcement, combatant verification was not going to be starting on June 14 (reftel). Martin said that, at a meeting that same morning with Maoist chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal (aka Prachanda), the senior deputy commander of the Maoist People's Liberation Army, Nanda Kishor Pun (aka Pasang), and deputy commander Janardan Sharma (aka Prabhakar), the Maoists had angrily informed him they were not prepared to go ahead with the second phase. The reason they cited was the killings of five Maoist leaders in the Terai since June 5.

## Killings of Maoists In the Terai

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¶13. (C) Martin and his political adviser John Norris said the Maoists were particularly exercised about three of the killings. On June 13, two leaders of the Maoist Young Communist League (YCL) were killed in Rupandehi District, allegedly by cadre of the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF). One of them, Binod Panta (aka Jitendra), was also reportedly a member of the YCL Central Committee. A day earlier, members of the Maoist splinter Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (People's Terai Liberation Front) were allegedly behind the murder of Dashrath Thakur (aka Rohit) in Saptari District. Rohit was a member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Central Committee. In spite of the killings, Martin hoped that the Maoists would agree to begin combatant verification shortly, perhaps by June 18.

## Need For Government Action

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¶14. (C) The UNMIN head stated that these events highlighted the negative effect of the continuing instability and insecurity in the Terai. Martin stressed that it would be important for the Government of Nepal (GON) to act effectively this time to identify, arrest and prosecute the culprits. He expressed doubt, however, that the GON would prove itself any more capable of appropriate action this time than it had done in the past. He cited the example of the massacre by Madhesis of Maoists in Gaur in March where it had taken months for an official investigation to begin. The

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Ambassador agreed that rapid GON action was desirable. He also voiced his concern that the killings might intensify the conflict between the Maoists and the Madhesis. The U.S. was already expecting clashes, he noted, in response to the Maoist scheduled month-long program in the Terai which had started a week earlier. Martin confessed that he was at a loss for what to do to improve the situation in the Terai.

## Killings Undermine Maoist Chief Dahal

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¶15. (C) The UNMIN chief made the point that the killings undermined the position of Maoist chief Dahal. Martin claimed that Dahal had spent considerable effort to keep his more radical Maoist colleagues under control and engaged in the peace process in the wake of the Gaur massacre. The Ambassador agreed that the killings might lead the Maoists to swing in a negative direction. Nevertheless, he hoped that Dahal's hardliners and "harder liners" among the Maoists would have little choice in the end but to stay in the process. The political parties were not going to commit suicide by handing total power over to the Maoists, and the Nepal Army remained intact and able to defend the government in the event the Maoists attempted to take power by force.

## YCL Embodies Maoists' Violation of Their Peace Commitments

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¶16. (C) The Ambassador also took the opportunity to thank the UNMIN chief for his frank words about the YCL in remarks to the press June 12. The Ambassador completely concurred with Martin's call for the YCL to end its abuses and act in accordance with the law and human rights norms. The Ambassador agreed as well with Martin's public assertion that the YCL leadership was drawn from the PLA, noting that he had said so himself in a speech in Pokhara on June 12. The Ambassador added that the failure of many PLA commanders to go into the UN-monitored cantonments was itself a violation of the peace accords. John Norris responded that, to UNMIN's surprise, the GON had seemed to accept the Maoist idea when the camps were established that some PLA combatants would stay outside and engage in politics instead. But when

pressed, Norris also conceded that those PLA members who did not enter the cantonments should have shown up and been formally deregistered from the PLA. That had not happened. Norris also admitted that the political parties had never agreed that the Maoists would be allowed to form a paramilitary group, which was what the YCL was.

Verification: UNMIN's Plan

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¶7. (C) The Ambassador inquired how verification would proceed. Martin responded that UNMIN planned to begin with the PLA's "First Division" cantonments in Ilam District (in southeastern Nepal). UNMIN had requested that the Maoists first present the combatants with the longest length of service. The idea was to identify those who clearly qualified early on, so UNMIN arms monitors could focus on those they suspected of being illegal, new recruits, or children. Every combatant would undergo a detailed interview. There was no formal appeals process for those found to be unqualified, but the expectation was that contested cases would go to Pasang, who was the senior Maoist representative on the Joint Monitoring Coordinating Committee (JMCC), and UNMIN military adviser General Jan Erik Wilhemsen, who was the JMCC chair. (Note: Norris told Emboff recently that the interviews could take up to 45 minutes and that residents of the 21 satellite cantonments would be transported to the 7 main divisional camps for this purpose.)

Assisting the Discharged Children

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¶8. (C) Martin stated that UNICEF and its partners were prepared to assist the children whom UNMIN discharged from the camps. They would work on returning them to their

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communities and their families. One issue that had not been decided was how to ensure that children got the five months of pay to which they were entitled. It was not safe or appropriate to discharge children with large sums of money in their possession. The UNMIN chief and the Ambassador agreed that it would be better for that money to be paid in installments. The Ambassador indicated, however, that he was skeptical that the money would reach the children. The Maoist leaders would try to hold on to as much of it as they could. Martin said UNMIN had provided the High-Level Cantonment Management Committee with the names and details of the 30,000 plus individuals registered in the first phase. Norris noted that GON officials had won agreement that the Maoists would at least provide receipts to show they had handed over the money.

No Plan For Discharged Adults

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¶9. (C) The UNMIN head complained that the GON had no plan for how to handle the new recruits whom UNMIN discharged from the cantonments. Instead, it seemed to be waiting for the donors to come up with a plan. Martin worried that, absent training and reintegration programs, these new recruits would gravitate to the YCL. He said he would have a better idea of the magnitude of the problem after combatant verification was complete in Ilam. The camps appeared to have varied populations, with some having significantly higher or lower percentages of children, for example, but Ilam would at least provide a benchmark.

Comment

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¶10. (C) Post had hoped that June 14 would mark another big step forward in Nepal's peace process. Instead, the second phase of Maoist combatant registration was delayed -- once again. UNMIN Chief Martin seemed only slightly optimistic in his discussion with the Ambassador that the process could get

back on track within the coming days. In a statement issued June 14, UNMIN condemned the recent murders of Maoist cadre and called "on the authorities to ... bring those responsible to justice." The statement added that UNMIN and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had sent investigation teams to Rupandehi District, the site of the June 13 killings. The press release concluded with the following line: "UNMIN expects to be informed that the second stage of registration can proceed in the next few days." We certainly hope that will be the case.

MORIARTY